REMARKS

The Official Action dated February 12, 2004 has been received and its contents carefully noted. In view thereof, claims 8 and 9 have been cancelled without prejudiced nor disclaimer of the subject matter set forth therein and claims 1, 10, 12 and 13 have been amended in order to better define that which Applicants regard as the invention. Accordingly, claims 1-3 and 10-13 are presently pending in the instant application.

Initially, Applicants wish to note in the Office Action summary, the Examiner refers to claims 1-13 as pending in the present application. It is noted that with the amendments under article 19, only claims 1-3 and 8-13 were actually presented for consideration by the Examiner. Accordingly, the following comments reflect this distinction.

With reference now to page 2 of the Office Action, claims 1-13 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. 112, second paragraph as being indefinite for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter which Applicants regard as the invention. Specifically, the Examiner notes language in claims 1, 10 and 12 which render the claims indefinite.

As can be seen in the foregoing amendments, each of claims 1, 10 and 12 have been amended in order to better define that which Applicants regard as the invention. Particularly, the language suggested by the Examiner in each instance has been adopted by the Applicants. Accordingly, respectfully submitted that claims 1-3 and 10-13 are now in proper formal condition for allowance.

Applicants further wish to acknowledge the Examiner's indication in paragraph 16 of the Office Action that claims 9, 10, 12 and 13 include subject matter which is allowable over the prior art of record. As can be seen of the foregoing amendments, independent claim 1 has been amended to include the subject matter of previous dependent claims 8 and 9 and

previous dependent claim 13 has been rewritten in independent form including all limitations of independent claim 1. Accordingly, it is respectfully submitted that each of independent claims 1 and 13 as well as those claims which depend therefrom are now in proper condition for allowance.

With reference now to page 4 of the Office Action claim 1 has been rejected under the 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 5,458,857 issued to Collins et al. This rejection is respectfully traversed in that the Patent to Collins et al. neither discloses nor suggest that which is presently set forth by Applicants' claimed invention.

As noted hereinabove, independent claim 1 has been amended to include the limitations of previous dependent claims 8 and 9, with the subject matter of claim 9 being indicated as being allowable prior art of record by the Examiner. Accordingly, it is respectfully submitted that independent claim 1 is now in proper condition for allowance and further discussion with respect to the rejection thereof is no longer to believe to be warranted.

Referring now to paragraph 12 of the Office Action, claim 11 has been rejected under 35 U.S.C 103(a) as being unpatentable over Collins et al. as applied to claim 1 and further in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,071,627 issued to Child et al. This rejection is likewise respectfully traversed in that the combination proposed by the Examiner neither disclose nor suggest that which is presently set forth by Applicants' claimed invention.

As noted hereinabove, independent claim 1 has been amended to include limitations indicated as being allowable by Examiner. Accordingly, with the dependency of claim 11 on independent claim 1, it is respectfully submitted that this claim is likewise in proper condition for allowance.

With reference to paragraphs 13 and 14 of the Office Action, claims 1-3 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over WO 98/08771 and claim 11 has

been rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over WO 98/08771 and further in view of Child et al. These rejections are respectfully traversed that the International application when taken alone or in review of the teachings of Child et al. fails to disclose that which is presently set forth by Applicants' claimed invention.

Again as noted hereinabove independent claim 1 has been amended in order to include limitations of previous dependent claim 9 indicated as being allowable of prior art of record. Accordingly, it is respectfully submitted that independent claim 1 as well as claims 2, 3 and 11 which depend therefrom are now proper condition for allowance.

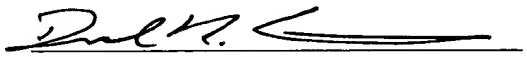
In paragraph 15 of the Office Action claims 1-3, 8 and 11 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 5,030,440 issued to Lywood et al. This rejection is respectfully traversed that the patent to Lywood et al. neither discloses nor suggest that which is presently set forth by Applicants' claimed invention.

Once again, as noted hereinabove independent claim 1 has been amended to include the limitations of previous dependent claim 9 indicated as being allowable over the prior art of record by the Examiner. Accordingly, it is respectfully submitted that claims 1-3, 8 and 11 are in condition for allowance.

Therefore, in view the foregoing, it is respectfully requested that the rejections of record be reconsidered and withdrawn by the Examiner, that claims 1-3 and 10-13 be allowed that the application be passed to issue.

Should the Examiner believe a conference would be of benefit in expediting the prosecution of the instant application, he is hereby invited to telephone counsel to arrange such a conference.

Respectfully submitted,



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